

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 04924 130048Z

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ACTION CU-04

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 PA-02 PRS-01 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 HEW-06 /031 W

----- 106484

R 121553Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8707

INFO USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS CARACAS 4924

FOR:STATE FOR CU/ARA; USIA FOR ILA/RODGERS

E.O. 11652: N/A

1. NEWS STORIES MAY 9 HIGHLIGHT THE NATIONAL CRISIS IN EDUCATION REVEALED BY A REPORT OF THE SPECIAL FEDECAMARAS COMMITTEE PRESENTED AT THE THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE FEDERATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AT PORLAMAR, MARGARITA, ON MAY 8, AND TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH AN ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF EDUCATION LUIS MANUEL PENALVER.

2. THE SITUATION OUTLINED BY THE REPORT WAS DESCRIBED AS CRITICAL, CALLING FOR AN OVERHAUL OF THE ENTIRE SYSTEM. THE MINISTER WAS SAID TO HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED THE VALIDITY OF THE STATISTICS, STATED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THE GRAVE CRISIS AND CITED THE REMEDIAL STEPS IN PROGRESS IN THE AREAS OF TEACHER TRAINING, SCHOOL INSTALLATIONS AND EQUIPMENT, REFORMS IN EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY, THE IMPROVEMENT SPECIFICALLY IN RURAL, SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION. HE CHARACTERIZED THIS LAST AS FACING THE MOST SERIOUS CRISIS OF THE ENTIRE SYSTEM.

3. DURING THE QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD THE MINISTER REPORTEDLY STATED THAT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S TOTAL EDUCATION BUDGET OF 4.2 BILLION BOLIVARS, 1.2 BILLION WAS ASSIGNED TO NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES, WHICH BENEFITTED 200,000 STUDENTS OUT OF A TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION OF ABOUT THREE MILLION.

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4. HE GAVE A FRANK ANALYSIS CONCERNING THE EXAGGERATED DEMAND

FOR AND COST OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION, MENTIONED A PROPOSAL FOR INSTITUTION OF STUDENT FEES, PREDICTING THAT IF SPENDING FOR THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES CONTINUES AT THE PRESENT RATE, HALF THE GOVERNMENT'S EDUCATIONAL BUDGET WILL GO TO FINANCING THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM BY 1980 AND 75 PERCENT BY 1990. WITH REGARD TO PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE PREPARED TO MAKE GRANTS WHERE NEEDED PROMISING NON-INTERFERENCE IN THEIR ADMINISTRATION BUT HOPING THAT THEY WOULD ADMIT SOME ECONOMICALLY-DEPRIVED STUDENTS ON GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIPS.

5. THE SPECIAL FEDECAMARAS REPORT PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING STATISTICS:

DROP-OUT RATES 50 PERCENT AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL, 40 PERCENT AT SECONDARY LEVEL AND 80 PERCENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR AN AVERAGE OF 30 PERCENT THROUGHOUT THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. THIS WAS REGARDED AS CRITICAL FOR A COUNTRY IN WHICH THE YOUTH POPULATION IS IN THE MAJORITY AND GIVES A DRAMATIC PICTURE OF THE TASK CONFRONTING THE COUNTRY IN THE THROES OF EFFORTS TO ATTAIN AN ADVANCED STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT.

6. AT THE CLOSE OF THE EDUCATION SESSION, THE CONVENTION ADOPTED A RESOLUTION, WHICH CALLS FOR HOLDING A NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF EDUCATORS, SCIENTISTS, AND INDUSTRIALISTS, THE SECOND SUCH NATIONAL MEETING TO BE HELD, THE FIRST HAVING TAKEN PLACE IN FEBRUARY 1962 AT THE VENEZUELAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION (RESEARCH) IVIC.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, DATA, BUDGETS, EDUCATION, PRESS COMMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975CARACA04924
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750167-0517
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750558/aaaacatp.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION CU
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 JUL 2003 by SilvaL0>; APPROVED <10 FEB 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: n/a
TAGS: SEDU, VE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006